

one more time to be the ones to carry the burden, we are, instead, asking those who have had success, who have been blessed financially, and who have benefited from this great country, whether it was with what was done to support Wall Street, whether it was other ways in this country, for them to be a part of the solution with less than 1 percent on any dollars earned above \$1 million. I think this is a reasonable and fair approach.

This is about jobs. We are talking about the Rebuild America Jobs Act, putting people back to work, doing something that is incredibly important for our country and will grow the economy, create jobs, rebuild communities, and help our country move forward.

I urge my colleagues, when we have the vote, to move forward on this bill and that we all join in what has been a bipartisan set of issues of infrastructure investment and rebuilding America. I hope we will see that in the vote that that will be coming in the next couple days.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I thank and commend my distinguished colleague from Michigan for those very eloquent remarks on behalf of an act that I too rise to support. I thank the Presiding Officer for his very eloquent and persuasive comments earlier in this debate on the Rebuild America Jobs Act and the need for this Nation to focus on the increasing trend in inequality and a very troubling absence of focus on the compelling obligation we have to rebuild America at this point in our history, to rebuild our roads and bridges and ports and airports and schools.

The Rebuild America Jobs Act would provide \$50 billion very directly to rebuilding our roads and bridges and railroads and airports, and that is a pressing need for America, but equally as pressing and important are the people hurting and struggling all across the country. People are struggling to find jobs, to stay in their homes, to keep their families together, and those struggles ought to be heard and seen in this Chamber, on this floor, at this moment in our history. They are Americans who played by the rules and who are now out of work, out of support, and soon, sadly, out of hope.

For much of our time recently, we have been mired in the politics of deficit and debt, and that is not to say those subjects are unimportant. I believe in fiscal responsibility. I believe in cutting our debt, restraining spending, and cutting the deficit. But deficit cutting cannot be used as an excuse to gut the social safety net we have labored hard to create over 75 years. It cannot be used to ignore the needs of people struggling to find work. It cannot be used as a reason to neglect our critical infrastructure in this country and the sad and serious defects we now find in it.

One powerful and proven means to cut the deficit and the debt is to create jobs and enable economic recovery. What matters most to the American people now is jobs, work, employment, going back to work, back to good jobs, earning a living for the sake of not only their economic well-being but their respect and self-worth, their dignity. More is at stake here than simply a paycheck. It is the social fabric of our communities, our country, our families. That is why it ought to be a priority. Right now, investing in infrastructure in those roads and bridges and ports and airports is one of the most immediate job creators available.

The Congressional Budget Office has found that returning to full employment would reduce the deficit by 25 percent. That is way more than the politically charged and severely damaging cuts offered by many of my colleagues across the aisle. Thankfully, we have a plan to put us on the path to full employment, and it is called the Rebuild America Jobs Act. This bill would put America back to work immediately by rebuilding our ailing infrastructure.

There is no question about the need. The American Society of Civil Engineers recently rated America's infrastructure and they gave us a D. According to the nonpartisan organization Transportation For America, Fairfield County in my home State of Connecticut has the fourth highest number of motorists using structurally deficient bridges among all the metropolitan areas nationwide. That is an indictment not of Connecticut but of our Nation, and so is the fact that over 9 percent of Connecticut's bridges are considered structurally deficient. Nationwide, in fact, the numbers are even worse. One in four of our Nation's bridges is either structurally deficient or obsolete. No one wants another tragedy such as the one we experienced in Connecticut. It is called the Mianus River Bridge collapse. It killed three people. It paralyzed the roadways in and around the bridge for months.

It cost millions of dollars. It led to litigation that spanned years. The bridge's collapse almost 30 years ago prompted a major infrastructure effort in Connecticut focusing on repair and reconstruction to make our bridges and roads more safe and secure. We need not await the kinds of tragedies we saw 30 years ago in Connecticut and more recently in other States involving bridge collapses and other tragedies that show the deficiencies and unacceptable defects in these roads and bridges.

The need is clear. At a time when civil engineers across the country are calling for vast improvements in our national infrastructure, the measure before this body would accomplish exactly that goal. It would provide aid for States to be spent at their discretion and flexibility as to the projects but not as to the purpose. The purpose would be roads, bridges, airports, railroads.

This bill would invest \$50 billion in upgrading and repairing 150,000 miles of road, laying or maintaining 4,000 miles of train tracks, and restoring 150 miles of runways at our Nation's airports. It would also provide seed money—and this purpose is important—for a national infrastructure bank that will attract private sector capital to fund a broad range of nationally significant projects, going beyond the ones that would be immediately supported by the \$50 billion in this measure. That national infrastructure bank would be capitalized at \$10 billion, but it would attract money from private investors to do far more than would be enabled by the initial seed money.

This is a bipartisan measure, long supported by Senators KERRY and HUTCHISON. I am proud to have joined them as a cosponsor, and I thank them for their leadership. I thank Members on the House side, including my colleague, Congresswoman ROSA DELAUNO, for supporting this measure over the years.

A national infrastructure bank would leverage private capital and public capital to fund a broad range of nationally significant infrastructure projects all around the country—in Connecticut and elsewhere. These funds would provide an immediate boost for our economy. It is estimated, in fact, that for every \$1 spent on these roads, bridges, and other infrastructure projects, our gross domestic product would be increased by about \$1.59—for every \$1, an increase of \$1.59 in gross domestic product. We are talking about investment. We are talking about investment in America's future, in Connecticut's present as well as its future, because people in Connecticut would go back to work, back to jobs, back to livelihoods that give them dignity and self-respect.

With so many people out of work and a dire need for that kind of investment, common sense says we ought to pass this bill, we ought to do it now, without delay, and we ought to do it on a bipartisan basis. There is nothing Republican or Democratic about investment in roads or bridges or airports or railroads to make them safer, more secure, more efficient.

I ask my colleagues, regardless of party, to stand with us and millions of Americans who are out of work, to come together and find a way to pass the Rebuild America Jobs Act. Let's pass this bill now. Let's do it together, without any more delay. People are continuing to struggle and seek work, and this bill is the right thing for America. It is the right thing for Connecticut. Let's do it now.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I wish to speak about the recent trade votes that the U.S. Senate had over the last several weeks. I believe that bilateral trade agreements should

be based on the premise that by growing economic ties with foreign trading partners our nation levels the playing field on which our companies and workers compete. Trade agreements should also be a means to growing a relationship with established allies that share our commitment to democratic values in an effort to work toward achieving common goals. Over the past several weeks, the U.S. Congress has weighed in on several pieces of legislation that—on balance—keep faith with these goals.

Before I speak to each of the free trade agreements, I would like to reflect on the currency exchange rate oversight reform bill that the U.S. Senate considered just before the pending free trade agreements. It is important to note that playing by the rules is an important element of fair and free trade, and it is a theme I will address several times today in my remarks. The concerns of many Coloradans who both supported and opposed this currency legislation were fundamentally based on fairness. Both sides understand that intentionally undervalued foreign currencies hurt the competitiveness of American exports. I supported currency reform legislation because any country that is intentionally undercutting American companies and workers through the manipulation of its currency, especially if it had agreed to play by specific rules, must be held accountable. That is common sense—and a matter of fairness. This legislation will allow the United States to clearly identify fundamentally misaligned currencies and initiate purposeful efforts to work bilaterally and multilaterally to seek corrective action. We must work in the interest of American manufacturers—and American workers—that rely on a level playing field to succeed, while also engaging our trade partners to work collaboratively to resolve these important concerns. I believe that this currency-related legislation, which passed the U.S. Senate in a bipartisan manner, will send the appropriate signal that we expect our trade partners to live up to our shared commitment to compete fairly in the global marketplace.

More recently, the U.S. Congress considered free trade agreements with Korea, Panama, and Colombia. We enjoy good diplomatic relationships with each of these countries and the United States has a particular interest in maintaining strong diplomatic and economic ties to these countries given our shared values on the international stage. More importantly, the Obama administration, in consultation with Congress, has been able to incorporate pragmatic and responsible ways to address the outstanding concerns raised with each agreement. While these free trade agreements are not perfect, I supported the passage of all three after studying each one carefully, and hearing from a wide range of Coloradans.

Regarding the Korea free trade agreement, the new concessions that protect

America's auto industry in addition to reductions in tariffs for U.S. products and strong protections for intellectual property and labor rights solidified my support for the agreement.

Over the last several months the Obama administration worked with the Korean government to gain concessions that will help American manufacturers compete in the Korean market, Asia's fourth largest economy. For example, the Koreans have committed to immediately reduce their eight percent tariff on U.S.-built passenger cars, including electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids, to four percent and immediately reduce their ten percent tariff on trucks to zero. After 5 years, tariffs on U.S.-made motor vehicles, including electric cars and plug-in hybrids, will be reduced to zero. In addition, we have strengthened safeguards that will prevent any large influx of Korean cars into the U.S. market to protect against unintended effects of the removal of trade barriers. These new concessions won the support of both the U.S. auto industry and the United Auto Workers.

With regard to agricultural products, Colorado producers will benefit from increased market access in Korea through the reduction of existing tariffs on wheat and corn. Existing 40 percent tariffs on certain beef products will be phased out over 15 years and the United States will engage continuously with Korea to plan the removal of other tariff barriers. When I hosted the Korean Ambassador, Han Duk Soo, in Colorado in April of this year, I made it clear that Colorado agricultural producers expect a reasoned approach to removing restrictions and other trade barriers that are in conflict with international sanitary standards and sound science. I am very hopeful that this agreement will help Colorado producers build a relationship of trust with Korean consumers so that they come to understand the high quality of Colorado beef and the well-justified pride that our State feels about its beef.

Autos and agricultural products are just a few areas where American producers will gain better access to the Korean market. Overall, the U.S. International Trade Commission estimated that tariff cuts alone to a variety of U.S. goods could amount to an increase of \$10 billion to \$11 billion of U.S. goods exports alone. This will help produce a much-needed boost to the U.S. economy. This agreement also includes provisions related to labor and the environment that are the strongest standards to enforce domestic environmental and labor laws included in any trade agreement. It also includes robust protections for intellectual property rights that will set a new benchmark to protect American-made ideas.

In addition to supporting opportunities for American exports, the agreement will enhance America's relationship with a strong partner that is committed to democratic values on the Korean Peninsula. More than 60 years

after the Korean war, this trade agreement will serve to further strengthen bilateral ties in a region of growing strategic value to the United States. As a member of the U.S. Senate Armed Services and Intelligence Committees, this was another important factor in my support of the Korea free trade agreement.

Similarly, the Panama free trade agreement, like its Korean counterpart, is aimed to help grow the U.S. economy. In the Panama agreement, we have also included enforceable mechanisms to protect the environment and the rights of Panamanian workers. To address financial and tax concerns and further support labor protections, the United States worked bilaterally with Panama to institute robust legal reforms that protect against the country being used as a tax haven while further enhancing labor protections in Panama. The United States and Panama have worked collaboratively to strengthen tax transparency in support of curbing illicit financial transactions associated with money laundering activities. Notably, due to its positive actions, Panama was removed from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development "Gray List" of countries that have agreed to, but not yet adopted an international tax transparency standard.

These improvements to the Panama free trade agreement will be incorporated along with reductions in tariff barriers that will improve access to the Panamanian market for U.S. goods and services. Again, this should give a boost to American business at a time when our government should be doing everything it can to help grow our economy.

Currently, U.S. industrial goods face an average tariff of seven percent in Panama and U.S. agricultural goods face an average tariff of 15 percent, while most of Panama's products enter the United States duty-free. After implementation of this agreement, more than 87 percent of U.S. exports of consumer and industrial products to Panama will become duty-free immediately, with remaining tariffs phased out over ten years. Almost half of U.S. agricultural exports will also benefit from immediate duty-free treatment, with most of the remaining tariffs to be eliminated within 15 years. Of particular importance for Colorado is beef, which will see an immediate removal of a 30 percent tariff for prime and choice cut beef, and wheat, which will lock in its already tariff-free treatment.

As Panama embarks on a historic \$5 billion infrastructure project to revamp and expand the Panama Canal, American businesses will be better situated to compete for opportunities in the Panamanian market as a result of this free trade agreement. Additionally, this agreement will enhance our strong relationship with Panama, which serves as a major international

trade thoroughfare for the United States and the world.

And finally, the Colombia free trade agreement, which was a vote that took even greater deliberation.

Colombia is a strong U.S. ally in Latin America and is a critical regional and global partner. Colombia's market is the third largest for the United States in Latin America and U.S. producers have been losing market share quickly as the Colombians strengthen economic ties with Canada, the European Union and the Mercosur countries of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. As other countries facilitate trade with Colombia, American producers have faced continued tariffs on goods exported to Colombia, while Colombian goods face few tariffs into the United States. Currently, the average U.S. tariff on the few Colombian goods subject to a tariff is 3 percent. Colombia's average tariff on U.S. exported goods is 12.5 percent. This agreement will increase market access for U.S. goods and services in Colombia by immediately eliminating duties on 80 percent of U.S. exports to Colombia, with all remaining tariffs eliminated within 10 years.

These numbers show why American businesses have been eager to level the playing field with foreign competitors that have benefited from preferential tariff treatment in Colombia. Still, there have been long-standing concerns with Colombia's history of violence and its human rights record, issues that deeply concern not only me, but many Coloradans. I have looked to Colombia and supporters of this agreement to make the case that adequate progress has been made to determine if the United States should move forward with a trade agreement at this time.

The Colombian and U.S. governments, as well as organizations that have opposed and supported the agreement, acknowledge the problematic record Colombia has had on human rights and labor protections. Most agree that progress has been made, though many disagree to what extent that progress has improved labor conditions and lessened human rights violations. After meeting with groups on both sides of this debate, I concluded that maintaining the status quo was not the best answer. Leaving things as they are now would not create any more incentives for Colombia to maintain or further cultivate its commitment to resolving issues of violence. Nor do I believe that the status quo would strengthen the ties with this key ally in South America. I ultimately believe that the recent labor and legal reforms in Colombia represent concrete steps in the right direction. The commitment of Colombia's political leadership to improving its record is also an indication that Colombia can move beyond its past. The primary objective is for our two countries not only to maintain the shared goal of reducing violence and protecting workers' rights, but also to become stronger economic

partners, enabling American business to compete in Colombia's market on a level playing field with our international competitors. Both of these goals help justify moving beyond the status quo.

Let me be clear: we must continue to work collaboratively with the Colombian government to ensure that the appropriate steps are taken toward responsible and meaningful reforms. A meaningful step in this direction is President Obama's commitment to allow the agreement to enter into force only when Colombia has sufficiently met predetermined benchmarks. These benchmarks include efforts to increase protection of labor activists, enforce core labor rights and reduce impunity for perpetrators of violence against union members. Additionally, the underlying agreement includes strong labor provisions that protect the right to organize, the right to bargain collectively, and to provide protections against forced labor, child labor, and employment discrimination.

These changes may not all happen overnight, but we can ensure that what remains to be fixed will be supported by our strengthened economic relationship and the social and economic incentives for Colombia to maintain a positive trajectory in reducing violence. Does the passage of this agreement mean that all of the ills facing Colombia will be cured? I make no such assumption, and I know it will take work and diligent oversight. The burden will be on the Colombian government to follow through on promised reforms and ensure they have the intended effect. It will also be up to this administration to ensure that the benchmarks laid out in its labor action plan are met to the greatest extent possible and that Colombia continues to meet these goals. Finally, it will be up to Congress to provide ongoing oversight to ensure everyone is meeting their responsibilities. I, for one, will be watching.

In addition to these agreements, I note briefly that Congress came together in a bipartisan manner to reauthorize a robust Trade Adjustment Assistance Program that will assist workers, firms and farmers to retrain and retool so they can better compete in the global economy. This was a necessary precursor to my support of these three free trade agreements.

In sum, the free trade agreements with Korea, Panama, and Colombia, while not perfect, present strong opportunities for Colorado and U.S. businesses while also including some of the most robust labor and environmental provisions that we have ever had in a trade agreement with any country. Trade issues are never clear cut, but simply put, trading with our neighbors and partners can help our economy when we set the terms fairly and find balance. By helping to ensure that our trading partners play by fair rules, and by opening foreign markets for U.S. products, the United States is better

positioned to win the global economic race.

JOHANSON CONFIRMATION

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, last night the Senate confirmed David Johanson as a member of the International Trade Commission. I would like to take a moment to congratulate David on his confirmation. The ITC administers the Nation's trade remedy laws and provides Congress with independent analysis and information on matters relating to international trade. I am confident that the International Trade Commission will benefit greatly from David's intelligence, experience and extraordinary work ethic.

David has served as International Trade Counsel to the Senate Finance Committee since 2003, first under the leadership of Senator GRASSLEY and now with me as ranking member. With his help, the committee accomplished much in those 8 years. Under President Bush, we renewed trade promotion authority and worked together to pass trade agreements with 14 countries agreements that helped to grow the U.S. economy, increase exports, and create American jobs. We also used that trade promotion authority to negotiate and pass our trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia and Panama.

Much of the focus of David's work on the Finance Committee has been on agricultural issues. These are often some of the most contentious issues in international trade, but David proved himself to be a tireless and effective advocate for U.S. exports. With his help, this Committee was able to reopen important international markets for American agricultural products, including the critical Chinese market.

In closing, David will bring 15 years of experience in the field of international trade law, an extraordinary work ethic, meticulous attention to detail and pragmatic creativity to his new role as a member of the International Trade Commission. We wish him well on this next phase of his career and thank him for all of the great work that he has done in the U.S. Senate.

FORT MONROE NATIONAL PARK

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, today marks the start of an exciting new chapter for Fort Monroe in Hampton, VA. I welcome the President's decision to use his authority under the Antiquities Act to protect this special place by declaring it a national monument and the country's 396th National Park unit. A National Park Service presence will ensure that we can properly preserve this historic, natural and recreational resource for the benefit of present and future generations.

On this important occasion, I recognize the effort that has gone towards establishing a National Park unit at Fort Monroe. I have been fortunate to